

C  
O  
P  
Y

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

Jack Foster  
Editor

Denver, Colorado

January 31, 1955

Dr. Francis R. Manlove  
Director of Medical Center  
Colorado General Hospital  
Denver, Colorado

Dear Dr. Manlove:

It has come to my attention that some criticism has been voiced by certain members of the Colorado State Medical Society of the reportorial treatment of the operation January 7 of Mike Stansberry at Colorado General Hospital.

I have received no comment from the Society myself. Several members of the Society, however, have told me that a few of their confreres have raised questions about the actions of Dr. Henry Swan, the surgeon involved, and the hospital in this case.

Therefore, I should like to give you the details of the part played by the Rocky Mountain News and the Molly Mayfield Foundation in this situation.

In the latter part of December, 1954, Molly Mayfield, president of the Molly Mayfield Foundation, a Colorado trust foundation, learned of the plight of little Mike Stansberry, of Sterling. His esophagus had been seriously burned by lye. He obviously needed surgical care.

The Mayfield Foundation was created for charitable purposes from contributions made by readers. Its principal purpose has been to provide surgical care for those who could not afford it. Many such operations have been performed by Denver surgeons in Denver private hospitals. Generally the surgeons have waived their fees, and the Foundation has paid expenses for medicine, hospitalization, etc.

Mrs. Mayfield learned that Mike was at Colorado General Hospital. She found that this family could not possibly pay for the operation. She talked by telephone with Dr. Swan, as chief surgeon who obviously would be involved, Robert Denholm, director of hospitals, and yourself as director of the Medical Center. She asked if the Mayfield Foundation might take over the expenses of the operation as outlined by Dr. Swan when she asked him what procedure might be involved.

January 31, 1955

It is the purpose of the Foundation not to accumulate funds but to use them as efficiently as possible for cases of this very kind. The Foundation actually seeks out needy cases, as the records will show, so that the money might be used in the way the givers intended.

Mrs. Mayfield was informed that there could not be any charge for the surgery itself, since this is a state hospital. At the same time she was told that the hospital would welcome payment of the other expenses. Mrs. Mayfield, as chairman of the Foundation's distribution committee, agreed to do this.

Mrs. Mayfield informed me of all these details. As editor of The Rocky Mountain News, I assigned Robert L. Perkin, our medical reporter, and Bill Peery, photographer, to make arrangements with the hospital for coverage of the operation. Permission to cover the operation was given by Dr. Swan and you on the understanding that the surgeon's name not be used. Such coverage was clearly provided for under terms of the code of co-operation.

On the morning of January 7 Mr. Perkin and Mr. Peery went to the gallery of the surgical room at Colorado General and witnessed the operation. Mr. Peery took pictures without in any way disturbing the surgical procedure.

Mr. Peery and Mr. Perkin went to the office of The Rocky Mountain News after the operation. One developed his pictures, the other wrote his news story. Sam Lusky, city editor, Vincent Dyer, managing editor, and I laid out the pictures ourselves for publication. We three also read copy on Mr. Perkin's excellently written article.

On publication, we received innumerable favorable comments from readers on the intelligence of the display.

We believe that this combination of vivid photographs and accurate reporting presented the medical profession in the best possible light. It gave hope through surgery to many readers. It reflected the very finest aspects of one of our state institutions -- Colorado General Hospital -- an institution in which every taxpayer of Colorado has a stake. It dramatized the terrible danger to children of lye in the house, and therefore may have saved some kid from pain or even death.

When several of us grayheaded newspapermen ten years ago began working with members of the County Society toward the development of the code of co-operation, we hardly dared even dream that such effective newspaper coverage might be possible.

Our problem at that time was to try to develop means of making possible more nearly accurate medical reporting without exaggeration and flamboyance.

Certainly no one possibly can say that our reporting of the Mike Stansberry case was not accurate and in the best of taste.

Dr. Francis R. Manlove

-3-

January 31, 1955

I believe that it is one of the finest examples to date of what the code of co-operation intended.

I find it hard to believe that any member of the Society could object to it in any way. But since there has been criticism I wanted to tell you detail by detail exactly what our part has been in the situation.

Sincerely,

/s/

Jack Foster

P.S. As you know, Time Magazine also covered the operation by photo and story. The Denver Time Bureau heard about the operation when they read the story of the Mayfield Foundation arrangements in The Rocky Mountain News. When Time Bureau called The News for information, we informed them to check with Colorado General to make their own arrangements. I was told that Time had cleared with Dr. William Condon, of the Society's Publicity Committee, for coverage, a step we did not feel necessary, since such is not required by the code of co-operation.

J.F.